

Congressman Jesse Jackson, Jr., today said, "I voted 'Present' today on H.R. 4681 because it is overly broad, restricts humanitarian aid and could make matters worse. It also undermines our ability to serve as an honest broker and mediator for a just and lasting peace. I condemn and stand firm against terror in any form, anywhere in the world. Hamas, which recently won a majority in the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC), has regularly and uniformly supported terror against the Israeli people and has continually denied Israel's right to exist. Everyone agrees that's an unacceptable position.

"H.R. 4681 uses an axe instead of a scalpel for the delicate surgery of separating the 75 percent of Palestinians who support a two-state solution from Hamas. It undercuts Palestinian moderates, both those already elected and those who might stand for office in the future, by omitting a sunset clause - a key element of any effective sanctions legislation. Such a clause would provide a clear political path for the Palestinian people and moderate political leaders, instead of making permanent the ban on Palestinian humanitarian aid. The ban undermines a credible anti-terror and pro-reform message that should be unambiguous in the resolution.

"Palestinians rank in the bottom 50% of the UN's human development index. They earn, on average, an estimated one tenth as much per year as do Israelis, and they have a mediocre adult literacy rate. H.R. 4681 further exacerbates this situation by permitting only very limited humanitarian assistance for the West Bank and Gaza to meet 'basic human *health* needs' (as compared to the Senate version, which permits aid to flow for 'basic human needs'.) For any other assistance, it requires the President to certify not only that the provision of such aid will further the national security interests of the U.S., but also that the President get Congress to approve such assistance in advance on a case-by-case basis. The President must also explain how failure to provide the assistance would conflict with U.S. national security interests.

"Furthermore, this bill includes extraneous and superfluous measures completely unrelated to punishing Hamas. Indeed, some provisions would do the exact opposite. For instance, Section 6 contains a provision barring members of the PLC from getting visas to visit the U.S. - an act which could target, ironically, elected members of the PLC who are NOT members of Hamas or any other foreign terrorist organization. Under current law, individuals who are members of foreign terrorist organizations are already barred from obtaining visas.

"Sections 7 and 8 contain provisions that would restrict the movements of Palestinian officials at the United Nations, and threatens to close any Palestinian representative missions in the U.S. The Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), of which Hamas is not a member, maintains

diplomatic relations with Israel and the international community. Therefore, this provision targets the PLO instead of Hamas, having the potential effect of ending dialogue with an organization that has signed agreements with Israel, is not listed as a foreign terrorist organization, and supports a two-state solution and the Quartet's Road Map.

"It's inhumane to cut off humanitarian assistance, and imposing a ban on communication is counterproductive. The only way for warring factions to make a just and lasting peace is to talk it out instead of fighting it out. I look forward to voting for a bill that is modified to include the productive provisions in the Senate measure," Jackson concluded.